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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [KCRM](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: POSITIVE GOC RESPONSE TO UNHCHR REPORT;
COOPERATION PAYING DIVIDENDS

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer

Summary

¶1. (C) The UNHCHR office in Colombia released a balanced annual human rights report on March 13, citing numerous examples of significant progress over the past year. The report praised substantial reductions in homicides, kidnappings, torture allegations, and forced displacement, and said investigations and arrests in alleged paramilitary collaboration cases strengthened Colombia's democratic institutions. Still, the report characterized human rights conditions as "critical" in several parts of the country, and said the UNHCHR had received a "significant" increase in reports of extrajudicial killings. The GOC's reaction was positive, demonstrating that the UNHCHR's new collaborative approach with the GOC has paid dividends. End summary.

Report Highlights Human Rights Progress...

¶2. (SBU) UNHCHR Colombia chief Juan Pablo Corlazzoli told the diplomatic corps on March 15 the country's human rights situation had improved in important respects over the past year. He also recognized the GOC's commitment to address violations. Corlazzoli noted significant reductions in homicides, kidnappings, cases of torture, and forced displacements. He praised the GOC's increasing practice of assigning to civilian courts cases of alleged military crimes against citizens. Corlazzoli called for continued efforts to reform military penal justice.

¶3. (SBU) He noted the success of the paramilitary demobilization process, but expressed concern over reports of recidivism among some demobilized. Corlazzoli mentioned his concern at increased reports of murders of union members, but welcomed the GOC's signature of the Tripartite Agreement at the ILO in Geneva. He specifically highlighted the special teams of prosecutors and investigators working on the 200 priority labor cases. Corlazzoli mentioned that investigations showed some of the deaths of union members were related to their purported affiliation with the FARC, ELN, or AUC, rather than their status as union members. (The full report can be read at www.hcr.org.co).

¶4. (U) In the report, released March 13, the UNHCHR also praised investigations and incarcerations of public officials accused of links with former paramilitary organizations,

concluding, "(t)hese legal proceedings contribute to strengthen the rule of law and the democratic institutions." The report praised the contribution to human rights made by the Constitutional Court, Inspector General's Office, and municipal and other ombudsman offices. It highlighted the GOC's preparation of a National Plan of Action on Human Rights, and arrests of military personnel accused of human rights abuses. The report highlighted the deployment of operational legal advisors to military units, and high-ranking inspectors to each division, saying it hoped such initiatives would reduce violations substantially.

...but Challenges Remain

¶15. (U) The UNHCHR said the human rights situation remained "critical" in several regions of the country, "characterized by numerous and frequent violations of the right to life, to personal integrity, to freedom and to security, as well as the right to due process and judicial guarantees." The report's main criticism related to increased reports of alleged extrajudicial killings. Without giving numbers, the report stated the UNHCHR received a "significant increase" in such reports over 2005 figures. It said the killings were concentrated in 8 Departments, and attributed the violations to members of the security forces, especially the Army and police. The pattern was that citizens would be murdered and falsely presented by the military as terrorists killed in battle; the UNHCHR said, "high levels of impunity persist." The report also expressed concern that "political and economic structures created by paramilitaries in various territories and sectors of society remain standing," and criticized the GOC's efforts on reaching out to and

compensating victims of violence.

Terrorist Violence Widespread

¶16. (U) FARC and ELN violations of international humanitarian law were "serious and systematic." The reports attributed 12 of 17 reported massacres to the FARC. The terrorist groups were responsible for "murders, death threats, massacres, attacks against the civilian population, indiscriminate attacks, taking of hostages, acts of sexual violence, acts of terrorism, recruitment of children, use of antipersonnel mines, forced displacement, isolation of communities, and attacks against medical and humanitarian missions."

GOC's Positive Reaction

¶17. (U) A March 14 statement from the Office of the Presidency emphasized the collaborative approach adopted by the UNHCHR, and praised the UNHCHR's advisory role in helping various GOC agencies to protect human rights (www.presidencia.gov.co). The statement noted the UNHCHR had described positive developments in human rights over the year, and committed to continue to make progress. The GOC said Minister of Defense Juan Manuel Santos was leading its efforts to ensure military abuses of human rights were reduced substantially. Speaking during a session of the Human Rights Commission in Geneva on March 15, Vice President Francisco Santos characterized the GOC's relationship with the UNHCHR in Colombia as "fruitful and constructive."

Comment

¶18. (C) The UNHCHR report is balanced and accurate, including its reporting of increased extrajudicial killings, which we successfully pressed Corlazzoli to highlight. The report's recognition of the real progress Colombia has made in the

past year is welcome. Corlazzoli's collaborative approach has paid real dividends in increased GOC cooperation with the UNHCHR, and in solid human rights progress.

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